

Middletown School Readiness Council
Wednesday, May 18, 2016
Snow School
299 Wadsworth Street

Members Present: Betsy Morgan, Jessica Stewart, Sheila Daniels, Amy Waterman, Beverly Lawrence, Jen Cannata, Jerome Long, Jim Gaudreau, Wendy Berlind, Christine O'Grady, Susan Sienkiewicz, Marla Hinz, Donna Marino, Izzi Greenberg, Pat Charles and Lina Kronenberger.

I. Welcome & Call to Order: Betsy Morgan opened the meeting at 12:12P.M., welcoming everyone present. Introductions were made.

II. Acceptance of the April 26, 2016 School Readiness Council meeting minutes: Wendy Berlind moved to accept the minutes from the above mentioned date. Donna Marino seconded. The motion carried unanimously with thanks.

III. Financial Report: was distributed for the Council's review. Jessica noted slots are all filled at this time, non-resident numbers were slow to rise and climbed to 12 and then went down to the current number of 8 total. News yesterday around part-day slots reported they are in the budget as hoped and at this time are not converted to school day or full day slots. It is hoped that they will remain in place for the next year, too, as the change would heavily impact our MPS preschool program. In other state budget news; Even Start has been put back into the budget. A round of applause followed that announcement. A brief discussion followed. Jessica noted the Community Plan funding and Early Literacy funds both stayed in the budget, but were reduced by around 6% and looks like we will go from \$90K to \$36K. Community Plan funds support the Coalition, so those funds remaining in the budget is great news for the Coalition. She noted further that Merrill Gay has not sent any updates from the Alliance. Izzi noted a lot of work from Middletown impacted the decisions made and that next year's budget will be even worse than this year. The Children's Trust funds are in the budget, but were reduced. The OEC will re-appropriate the funds that exclude the Family School Connections. Mission is Birth to 5 not Birth to 8 and the Graustein match to Parent Leadership has been lost.

Coordinator's Report: Pre-K – Jessica reported the PreK - K group work has had a good year and has continued its work on transition to kindergarten. Most recently, a letter was developed to be handed out as part of the kindergarten registration packets from Dr. Charles to parents on kindergarten readiness. The letter includes a list of books and Jessica has provided Russell Library with several copies of each title for parents to read to their children. This year the PreK - K group decided to take advantage of the information garnered through the DIAL 4 administration and share weaknesses of children with their child care program so staff can give them additional support over the summer months. Once again, children entering kindergarten with no preschool experience will be recommended for the Kick Start program. FRC Director, Amy Waterman, is working with Jessica on this initiative. Jessica noted focus for next year's PreK – K group will continue to be on the transition process. Reviewing professional development offered through the Middletown Early Childhood Network (MECN), Jessica reported social/emotional development was the focus of several workshops, one of which was titled "Using a New Lens" and 29 people participated in this training. ACES offered a six hour

session on this subject and it was attended by about 12 MPS staff. All who have taken this training, found it very beneficial. Town & Country Early Learning Center trained all their staff in Using a New Lens, and after the positive reception of that training, offered Circle of Security training to which 9 teachers participated. Jessica, Amy Waterman and Monica Belyea are working on ramping up the advancement of Circle of Security training opportunities throughout the early childhood community in district and throughout the city. Amy added she participates in group meetings with Charlie Slaughter and efforts are underway to keep the fidelity of the program and trying to mesh both the "Using a New Lens" and Circle of Security. Amy noted they are creating a master calendar. Who is training, where, target audience, what that audience needs and not to overlap recruiting and maximizing the community participants. Jessica added that Monica has a list of people trained to date.

Christine noted there is an unpublished white paper for teacher-child attachment. She is not sure where they fall in the training process but they are thinking of classroom work and circle based day from arrival to departure. Child First teams are trying to create common language. Jessica also reported on Grand Rounds in April, which was done during the Week of the Young Child, on Brain Trauma and Attachment. The facilitator was Mary Dineen Elovich from the Klingberg Family Centers, and all those Council members present were impressed with her and the subject matter, so much so that Dr. Charles booked her as the keynote speaker for the district's commencement at the end of August. Jessica requested program directors be invited to attend the key note presentations and Dr. Charles was in favor of that idea. To further support the efforts of exposing people to this work, Jessica is looking into booking Mary for a fall evening workshop for those that cannot attend.

Case Consultation Update: Jessica, Cindy Smernoff (from ACES), and Christine O'Grady have worked on developing a new protocol for these meetings. This is a new and different model, where they were trying to create a safe space for teachers to share and develop solutions while discovering how child behavior impacts staff. They reported this is working well and the number of cases coming monthly to the group has lowered. That said, Child First is very busy, so it appears there has been a shift in supports. At Dr. Charles request, Jessica shared the protocol of the meeting. Following a format with the newly created handout filled in and specific questions and strategies to help, Christine and Cindy go into classrooms to support and follow-up at a later date. In addition, Jessica has shared the case consultation concept with SS/HS project manager, Rachel Sadlon and she wants to pilot case consultations at Bielefield School. This is very important and something desired in the district as a means to support kindergarten teachers that have the very same children that may have challenged preschool staff. Christine noted Patrick Howley came and helped the group. Mimics circle of security, reflection on how teachers help or don't help children improve their behavior. Wendy noted when children misbehave there is something behind it that we need to identify and help. Amy also stated that they are working on exit surveys across the state, participating with a Uconn study. What we are doing in Middletown hasn't been done and people are paying attention. Glen Cooper phone conversation was huge help to this group, with interest in infrastructure, strong working relationships are present.

ELLCO Classroom Observations Update: the ELLCO observations were conducted on all community School Readiness classrooms. Jessica noted Early Literacy Funds supported this effort and School Readiness program directors are now reaching out to the consultant for

support to make any necessary improvements. Julie has been going out to sites, and recommending changes in classroom arrangement, offering trainings for staff, and making sure literacy is developmentally appropriate. Earlier ELLCO observations were conducted 10 years ago, however, since then the book has changed and some of the current programs were not involved then. As a result, comparisons are difficult at this time, but moving forward, it will be easier to do so. The consultant put the information into a document, which needs to be revised to share with the council. In the past CREC has been providing literacy supports, and while the data collected can't be used to compare, it shows similar areas for improvement.

Equity Summit Presentation: was provided by Izzi Grenberg and Amy Waterman on the conference they attended in October. They noted the conference was powerful and impactful and focused on financial, race, age, social justice, youth rights, LGBT rights, etc. They shared the video from the conference with the Council. Discussion followed.

Other: Izzi noted she is working on a report on how Middletown children are doing as a follow-up to the previous report. This report compiles a lot of information that will connect groups of people, organizations, etc. In addition, Izzi reported efforts are in the works for creating a community conversation in the fall. Jim asked how we can support this.

Community Messenger Update: Donna was pleased to report work has progressed on this initiative. She shared materials for the messengers including a bag and button and said I.D.s will be made for each volunteer. Donna noted that every month volunteers will learn about new resources and gave currently learning about Google drive to summarize their work and keep a log. Efforts are underway trying to move messengers to get the word out, NEAT has some community messengers too in other focus areas. Collaborating with NEAT has been interesting.

CHDI Impact Report: was shared by Jessica. Copies were handed out.

Next School Readiness Council Meeting: is scheduled for June 8th and will run for 1 hour.

V. Adjournment: moved to adjourn the meeting at 1:30P.M., seconded and the motion carried. Betsy closed the meeting thanking those present for their attendance.

**The next Middletown School Readiness Council meeting will be held on
Wednesday, June 8th, 2016
at
Wilbert Snow School
299 Wadsworth St., Middletown, CT 06457
from
12:00 P.M. to 1:00 P.M.**

Respectfully Submitted by:
Sheila C. Daniels